OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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LETTER JOYCOMMISSION

TO:

Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM:

Kathie G. Brooks, Interim City Manager

DATE:

December 14, 2012

SUBJECT: Tree City USA - 7 Year Anniversary

We are proud to inform you that the City of Miami Beach has once again received the Tree City USA certification. This marks the seventh year that the City of Miami Beach has been awarded this designation. The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation, in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. The Tree City USA designation recognizes communities that have proven their commitment to a healthy urban forest and an effective urban forestry program. It honors the efforts of the elected officials, City staff and citizens who work to maintain and enhance the urban forest.

To qualify for Tree City USA status a city must meet four standards:

- 1) A tree board or Department responsible for the care and management of the city's trees. In Miami Beach, this responsibility resides in the Department of Parks & Recreation, Greenspace Management Division, Urban Forestry Program. The program is headed by Mark Williams, an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist Municipal Specialist, member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists and Landscape Inspectors Association of Florida certified Landscape Inspector. Four additional certified arborists in the Greenspace Management Division assist with monitoring and managing the City's trees, among other duties.
- 2) <u>A Tree Care Ordinance</u>. In Miami Beach, Ordinance Number 2000-3279 addresses tree care, maintenance and protection.
- 3) A Community Forestry Program with an Annual Budget of at Least \$2 Per Capita. Miami Beach easily exceeded this standard with tree plantings under the Reforestation Program, which the City Commission authorized in 2007, tree plantings as part of CIP projects, and funds expended for tree maintenance, including salaries and equipment for a tree maintenance crew.
- 4) An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation. Each year the mayor proclaims a date in April as Arbor Day in Miami Beach. The Arbor Day celebrations, which always include tree planting, have usually been linked to larger events, in order to bring our tree-friendly message to bigger crowds. In recent years the Arbor Day celebration has been associated with the Spring Eggstravaganza at North Shore Park, the Captain Planet Carnival at Flamingo Park, and an ECOMB event at Marjory Stoneman Douglas Park, where volunteers planted 23 trees provided by the City.

Trees are a vital part of the city infrastructure, providing numerous environmental, economic and social benefits. Among the identified benefits are cleaner air, reduced energy usage, less storm water runoff, amelioration of high urban temperatures, higher property values, improved aesthetics, a greater sense of health and well-being, reduced anxiety levels, and lower crime rates. Being designated as a Tree City USA projects a positive image of Miami Beach, and tells visitors, convention organizers and prospective businesses that ours is a community that cares about a healthy environment and their quality of life. The designation supports those of our residents, who have worked so hard to ensure a vital urban forest, and encourages residents to plant trees and properly care for those they have. The Tree City USA designation also assists the city in obtaining grant money that is allocated for trees or urban forestry programs. Despite declining funds for urban forestry grants, the Urban Forestry Program has been awarded three Urban & Community Forestry grants since 2006. The grants assisted with tree planting, the removal and replacement of six hazardous Australian pines, the purchase of a water tanker truck to promote better water use efficiency and survival of newly planted trees, and the trimming of mature Mahogany trees on Alton Road.

We are pleased to report to you that the City's Urban Forestry Program will plant over 150 trees and palms this fiscal year, and a total of 4,174 trees and palms since the inception of the program in F.Y. 2006-07, utilizing designated funds earmarked towards the Urban Reforestation Program.

This past year has had many challenges for our tree canopy, with an increased focus on proper maintenance practices, including pruning both mature and 2-3 year old reforestation trees for proper form and structure. Two structural pruning projects were completed in the Biscayne Point Island and Normandy Shores neighborhoods, with 184 mature trees and 75+ 2-3 year old reforestation trees receiving corrective pruning. Prior to initiating this work there was extensive coordination with the residents of the Biscayne Point and Normandy Shores neighborhoods to ensure minimal impact to everyone.

The feedback received has been positive, as the residents appreciated the work performed and are pleased with the healthy condition of the trees after pruning.

Please feel free to contact me if you have additional questions.

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